

## Masthead Logo

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# Walt Kelly's Views on Conservation

Walt Kelly  
*Iowa State University*

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# Kelly's Views

## Conservation

by Walt Kelly

in the subway system (there *is* one a block away). At last a child offered to water a few of the trees. The Boy Scouts took up the fight, loosened dirt, poured water, and so worked miracles.

We want beauty around us. It has a good relaxing quality that some of us moderns have found only in the tranquillizing drug. A lot of city dwellers, and country dwellers, too, get their greatest sense of communing with nature through the power of the TV set. I told a story one time about the man, tired, who

rushed home from work of a warm summer day, flung himself down in the living room and gazed at a large screen where he saw a fine program on birds.

He told his wife about it later when she came home from a neighborhood floss-picking contest. "There were all these birds," he explained. "They were like on a lawn. First one would grab at maybe a worm or else like a crumb. Everybody would see that he was making out good, so over they run. They fight with him, until another guy sees that this ain't getting him nowheres so he finds a beetle. *Boom!* The whole gang jumps him. Another one runs off and pulls his own worm. Then, *whoosh!* They all chase *him*. It breaks up when a kid on a tricycle, looked just like Joey Nichols next door, with a dog, like our own Poopsie, come charging through the scene. Greatest nature film I ever saw."

### *Incidents and Statistics*

#### *in the Life of Pogo and Walt Kelly*

The Pogo comic strip is carried by 519 daily and Sunday newspapers in the United States and abroad. As of December, 1958, there have been 14 Pogo books published (Simon and Schuster), with sales of more than 2,500,000. Walt Kelly has also published "Songs of the Pogo," a book containing 30 original songs and music, plus a long-playing record of 18 of the songs; he has also done the illustrations for six other books.

The U. S. Department of Labor used Pogo to dramatize its manpower campaign ("Stay in School and Graduate") in 1957. Pogo appeared in all media: newspapers, radio, T.V., posters, stickers etc. During the campaign, Pogo appeared 7,560 times on TV. Pogo was again selected as the campaign symbol in 1958, to show the advantages of a high school diploma.

Pogo has also been used by the U. S. Treasury Department to help sell Savings Bonds. When the nation's college campuses got into the Presidential election swing in 1956, more than 100,000 students wore I GO POGO buttons; 156 student newspapers officially endorsed Pogo as first choice for White House.

Walt Kelly is a former two-term president of the National Cartoonists Society and a winner of the "Cartoonist of the Year" award. He won the Heywood Broun Memorial Award for the best editorial cartoon program of the year 1948.



His wife looked at him for a moment in the cold superior way that a Wife-In-The-Right can assume and said, "Harold, that was no TV program. You were looking out our window for the first time in two years. The men came and took the set off to be repaired this morning."

Before the screams of the innocent smite our ears, let me hasten to assure you that this story does not imply that all of us who have been taking our psychic need for beauty to Walt Disney are idiots. Not all. Mr. Disney is a good man with a mouse and I am all for him. I am also for all those people who get comfort out of syncopated stomach rumblings on a theatre music track in lieu of the real call of the wild. Mostly, however, I am for those who either through instinct or sheer intellectual power have come to realize that civilization must build slowly if it is to build at all.

Conservation of all our natural resources, trees, ore, water, wild life, in short, all of life will surely lead to conservation of children who might otherwise be men with muskets some day.

It is probably not a secret that I am interested in swamps. The Okefonokee in South Georgia, according to Floridians, is one of the world's most fascinating spots. Things have been preserved there which are beyond my powers to relate. This is true largely

because the swamp has been hard to reach by the heavy-handed, flat-footed animal who walks like a bear. Man can well be ashamed of himself a good part of the time for what he has done to his original surroundings, the world. But the numbers of us who sit about brooding over the fact are not noticeably great. We seem to take it for granted that Minnesota will never be finally shoveled into the last ore boat; that Texas and the Mid-East will never run dry. Having in large measure despoiled an abundant earth of inanimate materials, we sometimes, out of habit, think of masses of foreigners in every land as raw materials, exploitable and not always as human as we. Nationals everywhere are like this; Americans are not alone.

Recently, students in Oregon have been finding out that the swamps we have been draining are not always bad. They are great purifiers, for one thing. Also, they can be places of beauty. So it is that I am happy about the activities in Oregon, as I can be happy about the theories and practices of Albert Schweitzer. He has rediscovered and proven the existence of beauty in all forms of life. It seems that if one can have reverence for life in any form he will eventually have respect and love for it in all forms. The good conservationist is on the way to making this a better earth every time he pats a pollywog.



*A good conservationist is on the way to making this a better earth every time he pats a Polly wog.*